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AUTHOR(S):

UNO, Masaki

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Nakba and Hibaku: Dialogue between Palestine and Hiroshima

UNO Masaki*

I. Introduction

A series of Symposia entitled “Nakba after Sixty Years: Memories and Histories in Palestine and East Asia” were held in three cities, one of which was Hiroshima City, in December, 2008. A distinctive feature of the symposium in Hiroshima City was that this session didn’t take place at an academic institution for researchers but at Hiroshima City Plaza for Town Development through Citizen Exchange, a public space for citizens, and the presentations and the discussions in this session were open to the public. In contrast, the symposia in Tokyo and in Kyoto were held at venues which are academic institutions and their participants were limited to researchers. This feature neatly connected with the purpose of this session, that is to say, comparing the experience of the Nakba with the experience of Hibaku in Hiroshima caused by the atomic bombing in August, 1945 and on the other hand, ironically, ending World War II for Japan. Almost all citizens in Hiroshima have directly or indirectly experienced the sufferings of *Hibaku*. In this sense, they are more suited to enter into a conversation with Palestinians than mere researchers. That is why it is of great significance that such a project as the symposium on Nakba was open to public in Hiroshima. A dialogue like this should center around the experience itself, not the experience as an object of research.

The experience of *Hibaku* has been handed down to us by various means in Hiroshima. For example, the Atomic Bomb Dome, as a symbol of *Hibaku*, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996, and Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum exhibits a large number of materials for understanding *Hibaku*. In addition, there are civic groups in which the problem of *Hibaku* is openly discussed in Hiroshima. It might be said that Hiroshima has abundant means to hand down this experience. This characteristic reveals a sharp contrast between the experiences of the citizens of Hiroshima and the Palestinians. The latter have no institution like the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, and to make matters even worse, Palestinian narrative on the Nakba has been forced into silence in front of the Zionists’ narrative on the “Israeli founding myth” as the editors of this special issue on Nakba have already stated. The former have different kinds of difficulties from the Palestinians’ that will be discussed later. Hiroshima and Palestine, however, certainly share the experiences of

* Hiroshima City University

destruction and violation. It will be possible, I believe, that while viewing Hiroshima from the perspective of Palestine and *vice versa* we will be able to render transparent various issues which each side holds dear, and enter into a fruitful dialogue.

In the symposium in Hiroshima, three distinguished scholars, Dr. Rosemary Sayigh, an anthropologist, Dr. Akiko Naono, a social scientist, and Dr. Satoshi Ukai, an expert on modern philosophy, delivered their presentations and then discussed with Hiroshima citizens many topics such as the transmission of memories, silenced memories, imperialism, the important role of Hiroshima as a symbol of peace, and so on. For the participants who were not familiar with English, Dr. Naono and Dr. Ukai presented their papers in Japanese. I will generalize their contents for the purposes of this article, although we have a plan to publish these papers in English in the near future. Dr. Rosemary Sayigh presented her paper in English in our symposium with a Japanese translation projected onto the screen, in order that participants could easily follow the line of argument. Her presentation is recorded as her article in this special issue on the Nakba.

Monologue toward Palestine

From now on, I want to describe my personal experiences in order to explain why I began to tackle the Palestinian issues and why I am scrupulous about Hiroshima. Of course, this is not a dialogue, which is the very thing this symposium was aiming for, but only a monologue. However, I believe that we can turn this monologue into a dialogue in some way and that is why narrating personal experiences has significant meanings. The first monologue is, so to speak, a monologue *toward* Palestine.

During the four years beginning in 1977 when I was staying in Syria for study, I met a student of the University of Damascus, who lived inside the Yarmuk refugee camp. He was my first Palestinian friend, and meeting him gave me an opportunity to learn why they became refugees and how his family earned money and lived. During my stay in Syria, I sometimes went to the still Israeli occupied Golan Heights as a local staff member of the Embassy of Japan in Syria, in order to guide diplomats. Whenever I went there, I found the ruins of Syrian Hospitals which had been destroyed during the Six Day War, and I was disturbed by the number of Israeli army vehicles driving through the area. I felt that the Israeli ideal was very different from mine, and I never thought I would ever go to Israel, but, strangely enough, I was obliged to work in this country to which I never wished to go as a state secretary for the Embassy of Japan in Israel in March, 1990, some months before the outbreak of the Gulf War. After all, I stayed in Israel for almost three years, assigned to tasks dealing with Palestinian issues, such as informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan of the current situation in the West Bank and the Gaza strip and making every effort to come into contact with potentates in Palestine. It is assumed that all these experiences gathered and

lead me to be concerned with Palestinian issues.

Monologue from Hiroshima

The second monologue can be called a monologue *from* Hiroshima, in contrast to the first monologue which I gave immediately before. My parents were born in Miyazaki Prefecture, which belongs to the Kyushu region of Japan (Kyushu is an island situated in south-east part of Japan). My father worked for the Manchuria Railway Company in China before World War II, and during the war, he belonged to the Air Squadron and fought as a soldier in China and South East Asia, that is to say, he was one of the people who experienced a war. As for my mother, she studied at a nurses' school in Miyazaki, and then began to work for the Japan Red Cross Hospital in Hiroshima as an orderly in order to gain the position of nurse at the beginning of 1945, immediately before the end of the war. As she was born in 1927, she was only eighteen years old at that time. When the nuclear weapon was dropped on Hiroshima city on Monday, August 6, 1945, she had just entered the hospital and was exposed to radiation, that is, *Hibaku*. Fortunately, she was not exposed to radiation directly because of the building's thick wall and so she survived. Later she got married to my father and bore my sister and I. So I am the son of a *Hibakusha* (Atomic Bomb Survivor). The meaning of Hiroshima for me, first of all, lies in this personal history. But it is only a chance which caused me to reflect about Hiroshima and lead me to various problems related to Hiroshima later on.

My parents' experiences during the war are grave for me. To say more correctly, I used to think about the responsibility I had due to receiving these experiences. What were these experiences exactly? It was a misconception to think that my mother's exposure to radiation was *only* a meaningful experience for me. That my parents' experiences are at the same time the experience of the parents of a person belonging to my generation is of great importance. Japanese living during the war shared the same experience in that they experienced a time when the common population was forced *en masse* to participate in assisting the Imperial Rule which prevailed over them. Exposure to radiation left my mother with sequela. That is why she was discriminated against in case of marriage, work, and so on. Not all the Japanese who lived during the war experienced the same difficulties as my mother. Indeed, my mother's experience is the quite limited experience of some particular persons. Certainly, I admit the existence of such an aspect. However, my mother was equal to other ordinary Japanese in that she supported the war from behind the lines, as the occupation of nurse in war time roughly means participating in the war. From a different angle it can be seen that the war my mother supported caused suffering to people who lived in the countries neighboring Japan, and my mother was also one of the assailants. We should not avert our eyes from such a history. In this sense, my parents' experiences during the war are a starting point of my historical

perception of the World War II. Who were the victims? Who were the assailants?

On the basis of the fact that the Japanese caused the war and invaded other countries, Japanese were without fail the assailants. Who were their victims? In that case, it is clear that victims were the people who lived in Korea, China, and South-East Asian countries and those who were compelled to migrate from their motherlands to Japan. On the other hand, many Japanese suffered damage during World War II, such as the deaths and casualties of soldiers in battle, the deaths and casualties of civilians by bombings, exposure to radiation and so on. So the Japanese were also victims. Who were their assailants? We can say that they were the Japanese government and state which led their people into the war, as well as the people who did not dare to prevent the government and state from doing so. Most of the Japanese were victims as well as assailants. This estimation is of significant importance. However, we have to ask the same question again: Who were their assailants?

Did the enemies of Japan such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia etc., bear a responsibility for these victims? For example, does the United States bear a responsibility for the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and for killing many civilians? It may be thought that by saying that the atomic bombings were a part of and one of consequences of the imperial war, the responsibility for the atomic bombings has been evaded. But the appropriateness of this is apparent and rather one-sided. We should have more clearly insisted that the US army should have shouldered responsibility for the atomic bombing. This problem is closely related to the theme Dr. Naono dealt with in her presentation: the raw sentiment of the actual atomic bomb survivors. As she said, some atomic bombs survivors say "I hate the United States." Nevertheless, our consciousness that we were defeated and don't have a right to say anything and our reconsideration of launching the war have forced atomic bombs survivors to silence the narrative which expresses their true feelings. How we can justly treat their sentiment remains as an unsolved problem.

I would like to restrict the range of argument to the problem of "reconciliation" between Japan and the United States in order to clarify my point. "Reconciliation" accompanied with the various conditions such as the occupation of Japan by the United States after the defeat of Japan and our government's policies to the United States after the independence of Japan, has obscured the United States' responsibility for the atomic bombings. Until now, we have seen a strange scenario in which victims exist while there is no assailant. How was this situation created? It was because when we Japanese would inquire about the responsibility for the atomic bombings, the United States and the countries around Japan would counter by enquiring about the responsibility of Japan for launching World War II, and then we Japanese wouldn't be bold enough to continue to enquire about the responsibility of the United States. To make matters worse, the media as well as the government has deliberately underlined the damages caused by the war and created and scattered the public opinion that the "Japanese

were victims,” although this attitude and the refusal to the responsibility for the atomic bombing are two sides of the same coin. Whenever someone insists that the Japanese were victims, he speaks about the sufferings by exposure to radiation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the more the word ‘victims’ is underlined, the more the responsibility as assailants is obscured.

It is to be remarked that the problem of victims and assailants inherent in Japanese experience, especially in the experience of the atomic bombings as discussed above cannot be compared to the Nakba which was one of the two main themes in the symposium. Strictly speaking, such a problem has been raised only in Hiroshima (and Nagasaki) in narrower sense, and in Japan in broader sense, but I want to insist that we cannot make a perfect comparison between Hiroshima and the Nakba without understanding this problem. Although the experience of *Hibaku* was not the same as the experience of the Nakba, one shared something in common with another, as Dr. Sayigh explains in her article.

From Hiroshima to Palestine: Toward Dialogue

Until now, the center of my argument was the dichotomy of victims and assailants. For further discussion toward dialogue, I will present the structure on which the reality of Hiroshima reflects. Hiroshima has a three-layer structure constituted by the city’s three roles. This conception will provide us with a scheme to understand the reality of Hiroshima and build a foundation for dialogue between Hiroshima and Palestine. If you overlook this three-layer structure, you not only underestimate the experience of *Hibaku*, but also move in an incorrect direction when you try to compare it with other tragic experiences. The three roles of the city are as follows.

- (1) Hiroshima as a military city before the end of the World War II
- (2) Hiroshima as a city where the atomic bomb was dropped
- (3) Hiroshima as a peace memorial city after the end of the World War II

Only the first role of the city requires further explanation, because the second type refers to a well-known fact and as for the third type, Dr. Naono’s detailed explanation will appear in chapter two of this article. Before the end of the war, Hiroshima was a prominent military city where the 5th division of the Imperial Japanese Army was formed in 1887. Since then the 5th division had responsibility for the western region of Honshu (Chugoku district), ranging from Hyogo Prefecture to Yamaguchi Prefecture and participated in the invasion of Korea, China, Mongol, Singapore, etc. in several wars. From this limited information alone, one can easily see that Hiroshima had the features of type (1). Type (1) is equivalent to a part of the dichotomy, being assailants on the one hand, while type (2) is equivalent to the other part of

the dichotomy, being victims. And type (3) means the symbol of the victim. I have discussed mainly the relationship between type (1) and type (2). In chapter two Dr. Naono will present mainly the relationship between type (2) and type (3). In chapter three Dr. Ukai will discuss the memory of type (2) with reference to the Nakba.

It is a known fact that the tragedies of the Nakba occurred abruptly as a consequence of the declaration of independence by Jewry. The Nakba and the establishment of Israel as a nation-state were two sides of the same coin. From now on I will concentrate on one side of the coin, i.e. the establishment of Israel as a nation-state, for Dr. Rosemary's article undertakes the task of comparison between Nakba and *Hibaku*. Jewry in Europe has been an object of persecution. Although we can enumerate various reasons why they have been persecuted, it is of great significance that while nationalism rose quickly in the nineteenth century, "Jewry" was created to raise other nations' nationalism by way of persecuting this newly created "Jewry." During this process, the idea of establishing a nation-state for the Jews in Palestine prevailed among the Jews and they began to migrate from various countries to Palestine. Ironically, they at last established their own country, which caused the tragedies of the Nakba when viewed from the Palestinians' point of view. As a result of the emergence of this new country, many Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes and those who remained in Palestine faced a difficult situation. While the Jews were certainly the victims in Europe, they had become the assailants in Palestine.

It is to be remarked that the Jews in Israel so harshly underline the history of their persecution in Europe, especially the Holocaust by Nazi Germany that they have managed to conceal their oppression against Palestinians from view, or use it to justify their anti-humanitarian occupation policies. Is the situation of the Jews in Israel comparable to that of the Japanese from the standpoint that Japanese are escaping from bearing responsibility as assailants by way of underlining the experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as symbols of victimization? If we dare to put the information about Jewry into order, we can draw a three-layer structure like that of Hiroshima as mentioned above.

- (a) Jewry in Europe: equivalent to type (2) of Hiroshima, i.e., victim itself
- (b) Jewry at the time of establishment of Israel: equivalent to type (3) of Hiroshima, i.e., the symbol of the victim
- (c) Jewry in Israeli after the establishment of Israel: equivalent to type (1) of Hiroshima, i.e., assailant

As for Hiroshima, Hiroshima has not turned her eyes to and thought about the Nakba, let alone compared herself with Israel, notwithstanding her aim to be a peace memorial city. In that case, what should Hiroshima citizens do? The first step is to fix their eyes on Hiroshima's

reality. And the next step is to find a way to adapt their experiences to the experience of the Nakba. Dr. Naono dealt with the former problem and Dr. Ukai dealt with the later problem in the symposium.

II. Listening to the Murmur of Voices in the Hiroshima Memoryscape

Chapter two consists of the general contents of Dr. Naono's presentation entitled "Listening to the Murmur of Voices in the Hiroshima Memoryscape"

Survivors' Silence

Families trapped under collapsed houses, flames bearing down. Victims burned from head to toe, their skin slipping off as they stagger out of the city. Persons near death begging for water, corpses filling a river, piles of corpses doused with oil for cremation. These are the scenes of Hiroshima that *hibakusha* speak of when they attempt to describe the inconceivable scene of massive violence. While a vast amount of representation, in forms of written testimonials, drawings, video-testimonies, and news reports, among others, have been produced in an attempt to convey "Hiroshima," you will inevitably bump into the lingering silence of the *hibakusha* in the Hiroshima's memoryscape. Many *hibakusha* have remained silent, not because their memories have faded away. They testify to the details of the "living hell" as if they are still captured there. Some say that they still have flashbacks and dream of the scenes they had witnessed, even after the passage of 60 years.

Hibakusha insist that there is no language available to adequately represent what they encountered and survived, not unlike survivors of other traumatic events. Without any adequate means of representation, *hibakusha* resort to saying, "Only those who experienced the atomic bombing can understand what it was like." What makes *hibakusha* insist on this point, however, cannot be simply attributed to the so-called structural impossibility of representing trauma. Their memories have been mobilized to construct narratives of peace and Japanese nationhood, where those "other memories" that cannot be assimilated into these narratives are discursively produced as silence. Silence as such is hard to locate, but we have an access to it through carefully lending our ears to the murmur of voices lingering around that blunt statement I cited above, which rejects any further appropriation of memories by the master narrative.

Master Narrative of Hiroshima

The damage done by the A-bomb was so catastrophic that this conviction was deeply rooted in the minds of the people of Hiroshima; humanity cannot coexist with nuclear weapons and their use must not be allowed. Based on this

conviction—the Spirit of Hiroshima, an unwavering hope for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the realization of lasting world peace, the city of Hiroshima turned toward the world and began its journey on a path to peace.

(Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Panel A6001 “Path to Peace”)

The master narrative of the atomic bombing—the “Spirit of Hiroshima”—displayed at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum appeals to international humanism, based on the extent of the destruction caused by the atomic bomb. At the same time, the narrative helps veil colonial memories of Asia Pacific by reducing all the victims of the bombing to a homogeneous subject, “the people of Hiroshima,” thus erasing the individual role of each victim and the particular history and events that led them to be constructed into the master narrative of the bombing in the first place. Indeed, the master narrative of the atomic bombing has been criticized in recent years as the Japanese collective memory of the Asia-Pacific War that has produced Japan as an imagined community of “victims,” while fostering the amnesia of its colonial past and brutal conduct during the war.

Many scholars concerned with the politics of memory contend that collective memory, and even that which may appear as personal memory, are produced within fields of power dynamics, which include the media, the state, and popular culture. Therefore, the production and interpretation of *hibakusha*’s memories is inseparable from political and cultural battles over the making of the collective memory of the bombing. And the collective memory of the bombing in Japan, exemplified by the “Spirit of Hiroshima,” has largely been produced as narratives of the Japanese nation-state; thus, even personal memories of *hibakusha* are not immune from these narratives. Put another way, when the Japanese *hibakusha* and non-*hibakusha* speak of the “Spirit of Hiroshima,” they often enunciate it from the position of “Japanese.” This in turn subjugates memories of non-Japanese victims of the bombing and of Japan’s colonial aggression, especially Koreans, and makes them invisible in the collective memories of the bombing and the war in Japan. Signifying the Japanese national narrative, the message that was initially aimed at preventing the violence of nuclear war has caused another kind of violence: the subjugation of the memories of those who have already suffered from nuclear and colonial violence. This violence, furthermore, is not merely symbolic; non-Japanese *hibakusha*, especially Koreans, were long neglected and still are not provided with the same legal rights and medical remedies as the Japanese *hibakusha*.

Personal memories of the bomb held by Japanese *hibakusha* cannot be separated from narratives of the Japanese nation-state. However, I also recognize in their memories expressions of a strong desire to embrace “the dead” as their loved ones, not as national subjects. These mnemonic practices are often regarded as evidence of Japanese collective amnesia of its colonial past when they are interpreted by the political progressives. Furthermore, in the

progressives' interpretation, "the dead" loved ones are turned into "Japanese aggressors of Asia." In other words, even those mnemonic practices that attempt to offer a hospitable space to embrace "the dead" can be co-opted by the ideology of the nation-state.

Narrative of Peace and Collective Memory

The master narrative of Hiroshima was not constructed in the immediate aftermath of the bombing; it was about ten years after the event when memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were nationalized and articulated to anti-nuclearism and peace. In the early postwar years, the municipal government of Hiroshima, Hiroshima's local paper, and the national government of Japan all reinforced the understanding of the atomic bomb—as awful, but necessary—as the decisive factor in terminating the war, and in turn transforming Japan from a country of militarism to a country of peace. It faithfully followed what Michael Sherry calls the American "patriotic orthodoxy," i.e., the official narrative of the atomic bomb initially manufactured by the United States government and widely disseminated in the subsequent years. It goes as follows: "The bomb saved thousands of lives by shortening the war."

The decisive event for transmuting the atomic bombing in the "Japanese" collective memory was the "Lucky Dragon Incident" of 1954, where a Japanese tuna boat, the Lucky Dragon, was exposed to radioactive fallout near the Bikini Islands, the location of a U.S. hydrogen bomb test. On its return to Japan, the crew of the Lucky Dragon showed early symptoms of radiation sickness, which eventually killed one crew member. Concerned with the possible danger of radioactive contamination, a vast amount of tuna fish was discarded. It was also reported that the rain falling on Japanese soil contained radiation. As a result, people throughout Japan became fearful of eating fish, their major source of protein, and being exposed to rainfall.

Faced with this crisis, anti-nuclear sentiments erupted among the Japanese public. In fact, these sentiments became so powerful that, within the same year, the national Diet approved a resolution that called for the prohibition of the use of nuclear bombs, in both the Lower and Upper Houses. In these initiatives, Japan was characterized as the first and only nation to have suffered from exposure to nuclear weapons—now three times—and, thus, it ought to promote a ban on the use of these weapons.

Not only the survivors of the atomic bombing, but also the Japanese as a whole began to see themselves as nuclear victims. It was in this context of the "national crisis" created by the Lucky Dragon Incident that the experiences of *hibakusha* began to receive a wider public attention. While opening up discursive space for *hibakusha* to speak out, production of the Japanese collective memory of Hiroshima limited the way *hibakusha* can speak of their memories and how their testimonies are being heard.

Narrativized Memories and the Murmur of Voices

Hibakusha are expected to talk about the devastation in the immediate aftermath of the bombing and end with a call for “No More Hiroshimas,” even if they wanted to talk about their pain and suffering of having survived and/or outlived their loved ones. Put differently, we often reduce *hibakusha* to be a token figure of a call for world peace and the abolishment of nuclear arms and (dis)miss the disturbing affects of their memories by turning them into a narrative for peace and nationalism.

Narrativization of events in general, according to Hayden White, “arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary.”¹ This desire is particularly strong among the audience reading narratives of historical trauma, which are often filled with gaps and unsettling silence. The disturbing power of traumatic memories is tamed twice here: first by being converted into a narrative form, and second by being interpreted by an audience who do not wish to be unnerved.

Turned into a narrative form, *hibakusha*’s memories of the bombing lose their disturbing force, and their unresolved agony and grief over having survived the bomb are integrated into coherence with closure. Moreover, as a narrative, their memories are subjected to the order of genres that offer conventions and frameworks for their production and interpretation. In recent years, a discourse of reconciliation and calls for preserving firsthand memories of Hiroshima have further tamed *hibakusha*’s memories by turning them into an icon of peace and reconciliation, and a memorial for the sake of a historical lesson for the future.

Little discursive space is left, therefore, to testify what it is like to have lived with loss, and with the guilt and pain of having survived. While it may sound counter-intuitive, silence, in such a case, can be an active response, or a sign of agency, through which *hibakusha* refuse to be consumed by the narratives of Hiroshima. Moreover, *hibakusha* have actually produced counter-narratives through murmuring, “I wish I had died then”; “I envy the dead”; “I wish that others had been through the bombing, too.” These enunciations, however, are often neglected in the field of Hiroshima’s memoryscape; so, it is up to us to recognize and identify the murmur of these voices in order to produce truthful counter-memories of Hiroshima.

III. Pictures, movies, and memories of the Nakba

Chapter three consists of the general contents of Dr. Ukai’s presentation entitled “Pictures, movies, and memories of the Nakba.”

¹ Hayden White. 1987. *Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representative*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 24

The memories of the political tragedies of the twentieth century are inseparable from all sorts of different images that have and will remain with the rest of the world for future generations. However such images cannot always be published directly after the occurrence of an event. In fact, even in the case of the annihilation of the European Jews by the Nazis, it was not until the 1970s that Roman Vishniac was able to publish the pictures that he had illegally taken of the ghettos shortly before the outbreak of the war, by which time thirty years had passed. Thus, sometimes, only one newly discovered and published picture can highlight some aspects of our memories that we considered to be definitive. Although the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Nakba in Palestine are completely different experiences in themselves, they are similar in the regrettable fact that in both cases, one cannot expect the perpetrators to acknowledge their responsibilities or apologize in the near future. However, in other cases, a certain trend of reconciliation is actually observed. Therefore, we have to elaborate on a long-term strategy of image politics by taking into account the eventuality of the transformation of our own memories, and, furthermore, the necessity of their incessant fertilization.

As a protest against the Zionist's systematic minimization of the anterior existence of a local society, the Palestinians had to find, collect and publish as many pictures as possible in order to "prove" their existence and that of their life, work and industries upon the land of Palestine before the Nakba, even before the immigration of the Jewish population. In *Before Their Diaspora*, a book edited by the Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, we can discover the existence of a very vigorous Arabic society under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and subsequently, the British mandate.² On the other hand, as the emergence of the Palestinian National Movement was contemporaneous with the beginning of the era of mass images, the political leaders as well as the intellectuals, journalists, and artists of Palestine have always been highly motivated to develop suitable cultural activities to communicate their cause to the world and to bridge between their dispersed communities.

A preeminent Palestinian film maker Michel Khleifi took a step further when he tried to juxtapose, in his *Canticle of Stones* (1991), the existence of Palestine in the memories of WWII shared by the world, by means of remaking a French movie, *Hiroshima mon amour* which was originally made by Alain Resnais. His essential cinematographic operation consisted of replacing the Japanese-French couple in the original film with an elderly Palestinian couple, who reunite in the midst of the first Intifada. In this movie, the man has always lived in the West Bank while the woman has just returned to home after a long exile. Though their efforts, marked by difficulties, towards their reciprocal recognition, Khleifi not only accounts for the fragmentation of a national experience, but also suggests, with this

2 Walid Khalid. 1981. *Before their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876–1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies.

reference to Hiroshima, that here, we witness something like the birth of a world memory beginning with Palestine.

Traumatic events such as the atomic bombings or the Nakba tragedy might sometimes disclose, in a cruel fashion, divisions that are inherent to society, and which might be anterior to the *choc*, as is described in a film by Kei Kumai, *Horde of the Earth* which is set in Nagasaki. In fact, no matter how painful it may be, there is no other way to understand the problems of our time than by recognizing and conducting a thorough analysis of such a reality. Photo- and cinematographic images remain the best media for this purpose, allowing us to share the problems by traversing the borders of nations and generations.